

he's my brother, i just raise him

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Fandoms:	Minecraft (Video Game) , Video Blogging RPF
Relationships:	no romance thats gross , Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit & Phil Watson , Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit , Jschlatt & Wilbur Soot
Characters:	Wilbur Soot , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Jschlatt (Video Blogging RPF) , Dave Technoblade , (but wilbur and tommy are the main characters)
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Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of one hundred miles
Collections:	sob i love these fics sm , big cry fics , All fics I've read (mcyt) , one-shots , moth's fanfic recommendations , fanfics that hurt me but i love them (authors should pay for my therapy) , Phil's the kind of a guy to look at the child and ask "Is anyone gonna adopt them?" and not wait for an answer , mcyt fanfic library <3 , hixpatch's all time favorites , books??? yes!!!! , Sad boy Tommy hours , finished fics i've read , It's 3am and I am sobbing , Kit's Favourite MCYT Fics
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he's my brother, i just raise him

by [No_one_you_know](#)

Summary

“Wilbur, don’t you dare start-”

“You can either sign over the custody on your own will, or I’ll call CPS for child neglect. It’s up to you.”

“You’re threatening me.” It wasn’t a question but a statement.

“I... Yeah. Yeah, dad, I am.”

Phil stared at him for a moment, before taking a deep, shuddering breath. “I’ll do it, then.”

The first ten years of Tommy's life were the last ten years of Wilbur's.

Or, SBI is a family. The job of raising Tommy is thrust onto Wilbur's shoulders. This is the story of how he deals with that.

Notes

Heyo! So this is a prequel to my other story, "That's Like a Thousand Miles", but you don't have to read it to read this one (though it definitely adds depth to this one)

Warnings for brief descriptions of violence + blood (very brief tho). Also slightly more graphic descriptions of a car crash

Wilbur hated the rain. It reminded him of tears, like the sky was sad and decided to make it everyone else's problem.

Phil hadn't stopped crying since Tommy was born. Wilbur was quite certain that Tommy hadn't stopped crying, either.

Wilbur stared down at the crib, looking the screaming baby straight in the eyes. They were bright and blue and so much like Phil's.

"I will literally give you all the money in my piggy bank if you stop crying."

The baby did not stop crying.

"Stop crying." Wilbur groaned, dropping his head against the edge of the crib. How long had the baby been crying for? Days, it felt like. He wanted it to stop, just for a few minutes. Well, he never wanted the kid to cry again, but at this point he'd happily accept just a few minutes of silence.

The baby wailed louder, and Wilbur didn't even know what it wanted. Food? Sleep? Whatever the reason, it was getting annoying.

Oh so carefully, he picked up the baby. It was still so small, *too* small, in his opinion, and Wilbur partially feared it would break in his arms. It didn't, but maybe that was just because he was holding it as carefully as he could. He didn't know how it worked. Didn't know anything about babies, and why would he? He was a twelve year old boy and his only sibling up until that point was his twin.

He started to quietly sing. It was a song his mom used to sing to him and Techno when they were little, though no matter how many times he had heard it, he still didn't quite remember all of the words.

Halfway through the song, the baby stopped crying. It stared up at him with wide eyes, but did not make a sound.

Wilbur marked this in his mind as the first moment he'd ever gotten along with his little brother. Granted, the baby had only been at their home for a few days at that point, but still. This was the first real moment. Maybe, he thought, just maybe, he'd be able to get along with the kid after all.

"There have been complications" was all the doctors had said. All that Wilbur understood, actually. Not that he would understand much, he was barely twelve. He tried to ask Techno about it, but Techno wouldn't tell him. It was annoyingly clear that Techno knew what was happening, and simply wouldn't tell Wilbur.

He'd find out, a few hours later, what the complications meant.

It meant Wilbur had a dead mother and a baby brother who was much too small. They thought the baby was going to die, too. At the time, he thought that was the only reason why Phil had him and Techno name the baby (it would be much later before Wilbur realized it was only because Phil couldn't bear to do it himself).

"Theseus." Techno suggested, and of *course* Techno would suggest that. Techno was in the peak of his greek mythology phase, and wouldn't pass up an opportunity to talk about it. Wilbur, the ever-patient brother he was, groaned at that.

"That's a stupid name. Nobody even knows who Theseus *is*."

"He's cool! He slayed the minotaur!"

"We're not naming him Theseus."

"Then what do *you* suggest?"

"Thomas."

"You can't say Theseus is a bad name, and then suggest *Tommy*."

They ended up naming him Thomas Theseus Watson.

When Tommy was two and started calling Wilbur by noises that sounded suspiciously like “dad”, Wilbur almost cried. Not because he was weak- no, he was fourteen and could handle a little emotion, but Tommy’s *real* dad was literally upstairs.

Part of him bitterly thought that his dad wasn’t *really* Tommy’s real dad. He hadn’t raised Tommy, not even a little bit. That had all been left to Wilbur, and Wilbur didn’t even want to be a dad!

“Don’t call me that.” Wilbur hissed at the child. He’d distanced himself a little for the next few days, but he couldn’t just abandon the child. Techno was too busy with school, Dad didn’t want Tommy at all. If Wilbur didn’t help him, no one else would.

Wilbur didn’t want to be a dad. Before Tommy came along, he had never even thought about it. And why would he? He had been twelve. But after Tommy was born, Wilbur realized that he didn’t want kids. It was too much responsibility, too much stress. Too many routines and diapers and bottles and sleepless nights.

Wilbur was fifteen when Tommy was three. It had taken Wilbur those three years to realize that life was never going to go back to normal. Techno would start almost completely ignoring his twin and younger brother. Dad would take more hours at work than ever necessary. Mom would never come back.

Wilbur couldn’t help but be upset by it. Angry, even. Because it wasn’t *fair* that he had to move on so quickly, that dad and Techno got to grieve and Wilbur didn’t.

It wasn’t all bad, though. Wilbur had learned how to force himself out of the negative spiral early on.

And that was by being with the aforementioned three-year-old. Tommy was a wild child. He was always on the move, always doing something- usually that something involving drawing on the walls or getting into things he wasn’t supposed to, but it was always something.

Tommy was also loud.

Wilbur had figured that out the day their father had taken him back from the hospital. The baby was able to scream something awful. He hadn’t gotten any quieter in the last three

years.

Except for the fact that Tommy didn't talk yet. He babbled, which Wilbur had learned from a few google searches was something that he shouldn't do anymore. Kids were apparently supposed to know at least a few words by the time they were two, but Tommy didn't seem to know any.

Well, he understood words. He blatantly ignored instructions, but he understood them nonetheless. He just couldn't speak back. Or wouldn't, maybe.

A good father would have taken him to a speech therapist. Wilbur had brought it up at least fifty times by the time Tommy had turned three, but nothing had come from it. If Phil would have just made an appointment, even, Wilbur would have taken Tommy on the bus. But no, Phil was much too busy to deal with things like that. So Tommy just didn't talk, and maybe he never would.

But that didn't mean he was quiet.

Tommy babbled and shrieked and it would have been cute if Wilbur hadn't been so worried about this speech delay thing.

And maybe it shouldn't have worried him so much, because Phil didn't seem concerned, nor did Techno, and Techno was the smartest person he knew.

Wilbur had been reading Tommy a bedtime story when he nodded off. It wasn't on purpose, the book was just... Well, it was boring. Plus, he had already read it at least two dozen times. Even if Tommy didn't know the book by heart yet, Wilbur sure did.

One minute, Wilbur had been reading the book, the next minute, he was dozing off.

"Wilby?"

Gosh, he was tired. When was the last time he had gotten a decent night's sleep? Before Tommy was born, probably.

"Wilby."

Wait a minute.

“Wilby, fin’sh the story.”

Wilbur’s eyes shot open, and immediately he was staring at the child on the bed next to him, who looked back at him, expectantly.

“Did you just f- did you just call me ‘Wilby’?”

Tommy nodded. He reached his hands out and pushed the book against Wilbur. “Fin’sh the story.” He repeated.

“You... Tommy, how long have you been able to talk?”

He shrugged, then pointed to the book. “Please?”

“I... Yeah, sure, kid. Whatever.”

Tommy fell asleep before Wilbur finished the story, and Wilbur fell asleep shortly afterwards, still in the rocking chair next to Tommy’s bed.

Since that moment, Tommy started talking a lot more. *Actually* talking, not just babbles and screams, but using his words instead of actions. And from that point on, Wilbur couldn’t get the kid to shut up to save his life.

Wilbur was sixteen when Tommy was four. Phil didn’t make it to the birthday party, giving the same excuse he did every year- that something last-minute came up at work and he wouldn’t be able to make it. Techno had simply left, claiming that he had a study group to get to, which Wilbur knew was BS because Techno hated group projects.

Wilbur knew that Phil wanted time to grieve the loss of his wife. He couldn’t blame him, thinking of her made Wilbur sad, too. But it had been four years, and as much as he’d love to spend a day at the cemetery, *somebody* had to at least attempt to throw the child a birthday party.

Despite going to preschool, Tommy really didn't have any friends that Wilbur knew of. Even if he did, Wilbur, a sixteen year old boy, wasn't going to invite a bunch of four year olds and their parents into his house alone.

Wilbur fully intended to have the party just be him and Tommy. He would blow up balloons, get some store bought cake, and spend what little money he could on a present or two. Despite being old enough to work, between school and Tommy (and occasionally sleep), Wilbur didn't have the time to get a job.

This year, however, had apparently been the year that Tommy learned about birthday parties, which meant Tommy expected people and nice cake and presents.

The night before Tommy's birthday, Wilbur stayed up late, frantically calling all of his friends and asking them the same question.

"Do you want to come to my four year old brother's birthday party tomorrow?"

Fundy, the freshman he'd more or less "adopted" at school, agreed, promising to get Tommy a good present.

Niki, his closest friend, agreed immediately, of course. She offered to make them a cake from scratch, too, which he gratefully accepted.

Another kid, Eret, who he didn't know very well but Niki vouched for agreed to come, too.

Wilbur spent the rest of the night blowing up balloons and hanging decorations, trying to make a good surprise for Tommy when the kid woke up in the morning.

Even if Wilbur was sleep deprived the next day (he ended up sleeping through English class), it was worth it to see the pure excitement on Tommy's face. Seeing the child happy had been the highlight of his days for a while now, though he wasn't sure when that started.

The party itself went surprisingly well. Niki made a strawberry cake, which Tommy ate happily. Fundy and Eret brought presents: a stuffed cow toy and a wooden sword,

respectively.

They played board games, blasted music, and ended up gathering in the living room to watch a movie. Wilbur, Niki, and Eret took the couch, while Fundy and Tommy were on the floor. Tommy explained solemnly to Fundy that old people had bad knees, so they were too weak to get off of the floor if they sat down on it. That made Fundy howl with laughter.

Tommy fell asleep halfway through said movie, leaving the teens to talk amongst themselves, in a slightly hushed tone.

“I really do appreciate you all coming, He was so excited to find out all the cool teenagers were coming to his birthday.” Wilbur said with a chuckle.

“Of course, Will, we’re happy to come.” Niki said with a grin. She was leaning her head against Wilbur’s shoulder.

“Yeah, this was actually pretty fun. And the kid seemed happy.” Eret said, nodding at Tommy, who had ended up in a sort of cocoon of blankets. “But, uh, if you don’t mind me asking, how come your parents aren’t throwing this party?”

Talk about a total mood shift. At least, to Wilbur, it was a mood shift, maybe no one else noticed. No, that wasn’t it, because Niki definitely noticed the way he tensed at the question.

Wilbur had no problem talking about his home life, he really didn’t. Some things were just more awkward to explain than others.

“Will, you don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to.” Niki said, quickly.

But really, he didn’t mind. “Mom died a few years ago. Uh, when she had Tommy. Dad took it really hard.” He dropped his voice quieter, just to make sure Tommy could hear it, despite him being asleep. It was so painfully obvious to Wilbur, but he didn’t want Tommy to have to deal with the burden of it. He was much too young to know. “I think... I think dad blames him for it.”

“Oh. That... That sounds really difficult. I’m sorry, man.”

“It’s fine, really.”

“You know... If you need anything, we’re here for you, yeah? Same goes for your kid brother.”

“...Thanks, Eret. I appreciate it. I really do.”

Wilbur wasn't sure when his relationship with his dad had started to strain. He thought about Tommy's birthday party, and considered that for a moment. He had talked to his friends about the situation a little, and they all agreed it was messed up. But that wasn't really when the fighting with his father started.

It started back before Tommy was born. Before he had been left to raise his little brother.

It had started with favoritism and snowballed from there.

Because, no matter what his dad said, Techno was clearly his favorite child. He would take Techno on camping trips and to school events and he would cheer him on at every sport game. But he wouldn't do that for Wilbur, not really, not in the same way. Not like his mother would.

Dad was there for Techno, and mom was there for Wilbur. She would sing him to sleep as a baby, she would stay up with him when he had nightmares. She would take him shopping and talk to him. She would play him guitar and offer to teach him, too, if he wanted to learn.

He had only started to pick up the instrument a few months before her death. If he could have changed anything, it would have been to go back in time, to say yes when she offered to teach him the first time, back when he was nine years old.

But now she was gone. There was no more music, no more guitar lessons, no more shopping sprees while Techno and dad were out doing who-knows what. Wilbur barely even had time to *grieve* before the child was thrust into his hands, and he *hated* it.

When dad neglected Wilbur, mom stepped in to cover for his shortcomings. That was why Wilbur had to help Tommy, because there was no one else who could.

Sometimes, the grieving would show through irritated outbursts at his family. He tried so hard to keep it away from Tommy, and usually succeeded. Even when he ended up accidentally yelling at the kid, Tommy forgave and forgot rather quickly.

"I got in!" Techno shouted, and it was the most emotion Techno had held in his voice in a while.

Phil was beaming. Even Tommy, who didn't really understand college yet, looked excited.

"Congratulations, Technoblade," He read from the letter, "We hope to see you next semester."

It was a good day after that. They went out for dinner, and even got Techno dessert from his favorite ice cream place.

It was going so well until, during a movie, Phil had dropped the question that Wilbur had been avoiding.

"So, Will, have you been applying to any universities lately?"

"...No, dad, not really."

"Wilbur," Phil sighed, "you can't keep putting it off. If you don't apply soon, you won't get in at all."

Wilbur paused at that. He looked at Techno, who was ignoring him and watching the movie. Tommy, who had his eyes on the screen, but tilted his head whenever he and Phil spoke, that little eavesdropper. Phil, who was looking at him expectantly.

"I'm not going to college."

That got Tommy's head to turn slightly, as well as Phil's mouth to drop. The reaction was funny, especially since Wilbur had been making his plan for the last two years.

"Wilbur-"

"I'm not going. I've got money down on a cheap apartment, I have a good job lined up, too."

"Wilbur, we've talked about this. College is important."

"I know, I know." Wilbur stole a glance at the six year old, who must have grown bored of the conversation as now he was back watching the movie. He lowered his voice, hoping Tommy wouldn't catch the next part. "But someone has to raise Tommy."

"Will-"

"No, don't 'Will' me. I'm moving out and I'm taking him with me."

"Wilbur, you're being ridiculous. You're not skipping college to 'raise' Tommy." Phil spoke in a harsh whisper, though Tommy definitely heard him anyway.

"I'm not being ridiculous! You haven't paid any attention to the kid in the past five years, *I* have been the one to do *everything* while you sat back!" Wilbur wasn't whispering back. He was letting the emotion take over him, but he couldn't help it.

"I did *not* sit back!" His volume rose, but then again, so was Wilbur's.

"You did! You haven't even been to a single school event for him, don't you *dare* tell me you didn't sit back!"

"You don't understand the situation!"

"I *do* understand it! I was in the same one- I was in a *worse* one, but you don't care about it!"

"I never said that!"

"You didn't have to!"

When had they started yelling? He didn't know. But it was clear that Techno and Tommy were currently hearing... Well, everything. Wilbur couldn't find it in himself to care.

"You lost your wife, Phil, and that- that sucks, okay?" Wilbur continued to yell, "But I lost my *mother*, and instead of, I don't know, *consoling* me, you left me to raise a child! You can't get mad at me for wanting to continue raising him!"

"I am your *father*! I am *his* father!"

"Really, Phil? Because you don't act like it!"

"Oh, and *you* do?"

Techno had more or less grabbed the five year old and tossed him over his shoulder, dragging him off into Techno's room. He muttered something to Tommy, though Wilbur didn't quite catch what was said. He couldn't be bothered to wonder about it.

"Yes, I do!"

“You don’t-”

Wilbur’s voice dropped to a regular speaking tone, again. He said the next sentence as a challenge. “What’s his favorite color, Phil?”

“Red. Wilbur, please, that’s so-”

“It’s cyan.”

“No, it’s not.”

“It is.”

“Everything he owns is red. He- he only wears red shirts.”

“He prefers cyan. Maybe if you actually spoke to your son every once in a while, you’d know that.”

“Wilbur, don’t you dare start-”

“You can either sign over the custody on your own will, or I’ll call CPS for child neglect. It’s up to you.”

“You’re threatening me.” It wasn’t a question but a statement.

“I... Yeah. Yeah, dad, I am.”

Phil stared at him for a moment, before taking a deep, shuddering breath. “I’ll do it, then.”

Phil signed over partial custody to Wilbur. It wasn’t full custody, but it was enough that Wilbur was pretty much Tommy’s main guardian, and that was enough for him. They got a two-room apartment, and Wilbur started at a nine-to-five job in some office.

He took up smoking almost immediately after he moved out. The stress of paying bills, raising a child, working forty hours a week, and dealing with what he had deemed his ‘anger issues’ was taking a toll on him. Smoking lifted that stress, just a little bit, even if it left his lungs burning and his hands shaking afterwards. It was a decent trade-off.

It didn’t take very long for him to become addicted. He hated calling it that, but what other way was there to say it? He couldn’t go a full day without a cigarette. That definitely counted as an addiction.

With the smoking came drinking. It wasn't heavy enough to be like the cigarette problem, at least, but it was still... He couldn't go a full week without it. And he should have felt bad but he couldn't bring himself to care.

It was funny. When he had lived at home with Phil and Techno, he had really thought he took full care of Tommy, but the more that time dragged on, the more he realized that wasn't the case. Not completely, at least. Because on long nights, Techno would occasionally come in and distract Tommy enough to let Wilbur work. Phil would take them all out to ice cream.

Wilbur was in so deep over his head he couldn't see the surface anymore. Because now he had to balance bills and work and Tommy. Now making mistakes didn't mean failing a class, it meant losing his job, which would mean losing his house and his brother.

He wasn't going to let that happen.

So he did the best he could. He smoked and he drank, but at least he kept Tommy away from seeing that all. At least, he thought he did.

"Wilbur?" Wilbur had been tucking Tommy into bed, even though at seven years old he was too old for it at this point. Or, maybe not, Wilbur didn't know, it had been a while since he had read a parenting book.

"Yeah, Toms?"

"Your breath smells bad."

"...Thanks, Toms."

"It smells like smoke and that gross stuff you drink. I don't like it." Tommy groaned.

"I..."

"I don't know how you do that stuff, Wilby. The smoke smells bad, and then the drink tastes bad, so I dunno the point of it."

"Well, you see..." He paused as he realized what exactly Tommy had just said. "Tommy, why do you know what I drink tastes bad?"

Tommy's eyes went wide. "I don't."

"Tommy." His voice was warning.

“Are... Are you gonna ground me if I tell you?”

“I’m not your dad, I’m not gonna ground you.” He might have grounded him, actually, depending on what Tommy said, but that was for him to know and for Tommy to find out.

“It wasn’t my fault. It was a little my fault. Uh... You had a cup of water- well, it wasn’t water, but I thought it was water- on the table, and I was thirsty, so I got a drink. But it was all gross and I almost spit it out on the carpet.”

Oh, no.

“I didn’t spit it on the carpet though, you’re *welcome*.”

His seven year old brother had drunk straight vodka.

“Actually, I spit it in the sink.” Tommy continued, correcting Wilbur’s spiraling thoughts. “But it was *awful*, Will. I didn’t tell you ‘cause I thought you were gonna be all mad.”

“I... I’m not mad, Tommy. It’s okay. I shouldn’t have left it out in the first place. Really, if anything, it’s my fault.”

“It’s okay.”

No, it wasn’t.

Wilbur finished putting him to bed and left the room, though not before ruffling his little brother’s hair and turning on his night light.

If he cried about it later that night out on the balcony, a cigarette between shaking fingers, no one needed to know.

He started going to AA meetings after that. Not because he was an alcoholic, he wasn't, but he clearly had some addictions he needed help with. Even though he despised having to stand up and explain his situation with the drinking and smoking. And the Tommy incident.. How he had gotten so wrapped up in his own head that his baby brother ended up drinking some of his vodka. The people at the group seemed understanding, though he didn't feel like he deserved it.

They were taking a brief break from talking, giving everyone a chance to calm down. Wilbur sat outside with a few smokers, who he did his best to ignore. He wanted to quit smoking, too, and this wasn't helping. He tried to distance himself from the group, but pretty quickly a man appeared next to him anyway.

He was wearing a Reagan and Bush sweatshirt. Brown curly hair was stuffed into a Yankees cap, and he had the start of what looked like to be a beard, though he also looked young, not much older than Wilbur himself.

"I heard your sob story earlier. It was cute."

"I- what?"

"You know, the whole," He switched his voice to a falsetto, clearly mocking him, "I'm a single parent, my life is so hard" thing."

"I think you're misremembering things."

"Nope, I've never misremembered a thing in my life. They call me "memory man" back home."

"Nobody calls you that."

"They might."

"Sure. Anyway, doesn't alcohol mess with your memory?"

The man took a long drag of his cigarette, ignoring his question and staring Wilbur dead in the eyes as he did so.

"You want one?"

"Ye- no. I'm trying to *quit* smoking, jerk."

The man looked at him for a moment, and then started laughing. It sounded more like a cackle than a laugh. “Quitting smoking *and* drinking? Good luck with that.” He took another deep breath, then blew the smoke in Wilbur’s face.

It was stress. It was a mental breakdown. At least, that was what he was going to tell the police.

Wilbur socked the man in the jaw as hard as he could. The cigarette fell to the ground and he stumbled back a few steps.

“You know...” The man muttered, immediately straightening up and rubbing his already-bruising jaw. “You hit like a girl.”

Wilbur balled up his fists. “Oh? Then I’m sure you wouldn’t mind me punching you again, then.”

The man laughed again. “Thanks, but I’ll pass.” He dropped his hand from his jaw and instead held it out for a handshake. “You said your name was Wilbur earlier, yeah?”

“...Yeah.” He didn’t go for the handshake. Didn’t unclench his fists.

“Schlatt.”

“...Bless you?”

“The name is Schlatt. Are you going to shake my hand or not?”

Slowly, ever-so-slowly, Wilbur shook his hand.

“Understandable.” He dropped his hand back to his side. “How old is he?”

Wilbur blinked in surprise, confused at the question. “Who?”

“Your son. We’ve been over this- you said you were a single parent, I made fun of you for it. How old is your son?”

“He’s- he’s not my son!” Wilbur hadn’t meant for the words to come out so aggressively, but he did. He forced his next sentence to be a little softer. “He’s my brother, I just raise him. He’s eight, though.”

“My kid’s that age, too.”

Wilbur looked Schlatt up and down for a moment. Maybe it was the lack of facial hair, or the awful choice in fashion, but there was no way this was the father of an eight year old.

“I think you’re miscounting.”

“Look, I may be an awful father, and I might only be here because I’m forced to be, but I know how old my kid is.”

“How old are *you* then?”

“Twenty-four. Sixteen when he was born.”

“And you...?”

“Raised him on my own, yeah. Thus the drinking.” Another laugh. This guy’s laugh was getting to be annoying.

“That... That sucks, man.”

He shrugged.

They sat next to each other when they went back into the meeting. Later on, they exchanged numbers. They weren’t friends by any means. In fact, Wilbur found Schlatt *incredibly* annoying, but he whispered jokes to Wilbur while people were talking and was at least tolerable to be around.

Wilbur just wanted one nice relaxing day where he could just work on his music. Of course, whenever he really needed a break, he could always ask Niki to babysit- she lived close, and they hung out all the time anyway. But Niki was busy in college, working on a degree in culinary arts or something to that effect. It was ‘for the Bakery’ she would always say.

The Bakery was a dream of Niki and Wilbur’s, something they basically used to keep themselves sane throughout high school. “You have to study,” Niki would say, “How else will you do the bakery’s taxes?”, on the flip hand, Wilbur would usually tell her she should stress-bake more often, to take a break from her constant workload and, more importantly, “for the Bakery”.

It was just a dream, and it would always be just a dream. Even if Wilbur longed for it after especially hard days at the office. It was a great thing to think about, but nothing that would ever actually come true.

Tommy was nine when he came home from school, backpack held at an awkward angle blocking his face.

“Shoes!” Wilbur shouted from the kitchen, where he was currently making dinner.

He heard a quiet, angry mutter in response, and then the thump of Tommy’s shoes hitting the floor. Tommy then practically sprinted into his room, slamming the door behind him.

Something was wrong.

Tommy never was in that much of a rush. He also never came home without at least saying hi to Wilbur, usually going into a whole spiel about how his day at school had been.

Wilbur turned off the stove and made his way over to Tommy’s room, lightly knocking on the door.

“I’m busy!” Was the muffled reply.

“Can I come in?”

“No!”

“Why not?”

A pause, and then, “Because I’m busy!”

Had Wilbur been Tommy’s father and not his brother, he probably would have respected boundaries and privacy. Unfortunately for Tommy, Wilbur was not his father, he never would be. He was his big brother, and, besides, it was *his* house.

“I’m coming in now.”

He opened the door to see Tommy sprawled on his bed, facing away from Wilbur. He lay face-down against a pillow.

“I said you couldn’t come in.” Tommy spoke, voice muffled.

Wilbur walked over and sat on the edge of his bed, wincing at the creak of the bedframe. He really needed to get Tommy a new bed, it had been more than enough time, but he didn’t have the money yet. “I was worried.”

“Why?”

“You seemed upset when you came in.”

“I wasn’t upset.”

“You acted it. Tommy, what’s wrong?”

Tommy gave a response, or at least Wilbur thought he did, but the words were too muffled to make out.

“Take your head off the pillow, Toms.”

He lifted his head, but didn’t turn to face Wilbur.

“Well?”

“I got in a fight…”

“You- what?” Wilbur grabbed him by the shoulder and pulled the boy up to a sitting position to meet his face, and, oh, wow.

Tommy’s hair was messy and coated with dirt. A streak of dried blood went down from his nose to his chin, and there were a few small drops on his shirt, too. A small bruise lay on his left cheek, right underneath his eye.

The first emotion Wilbur felt for it was anger. Anger at whoever did this, whoever hurt his brother. He quickly calmed it into concern, instead.

“Tommy…”

“I’m sorry, Wilbur…” Tommy muttered. He leaned against Wilbur’s side, lying his head against his arm.

“You want to talk about it?”

“It wasn’t my fault.”

“Oh? And whose was it, then?”

“There’s this dumb kid, Jack,” Wilbur wanted to tell Tommy not to call other kids dumb, but held back, “And he was making fun of this other kid named Purple or something, and I told him that it wasn’t nice, and to knock it out. But he wouldn’t listen to me. So I punched him.”

“You punched a kid?”

“He deserved it!”

Wilbur took a deep breath.

“And then what happened?”

“Then he punched me back, and I fell over, and we kept fighting. And- and you should have seen it, Wilbur, because I was a *very* good fighter! I was better than Technoblade, and by the end, he was crying for his mom.”

Wilbur would find out later that this wasn’t the case. Tommy had gotten exactly one punch in, and then Jack had beaten the pulp out of him.

“Are you okay?”

Tommy nodded. “It hurts though.”

“What hurts?”

“Everything. My *bones*. I feel like an old man.”

Wilbur’s eyes widened slightly. “What do you mean your bones hurt?”

“My- uh...” He paused, thinking of the word. “Chest bones.”

“Did he kick you in the ribs?”

Tommy nodded, then quickly added, “But I kicked him back, so we’re even.”

“Right, right...”

He hadn’t read about school fights in parenting manuals. He had no idea what to say or do. All he knew was that he hated seeing his little brother hurt.

“Well, let’s get you cleaned up then. I’m proud of you for winning the fight, but... Maybe don’t punch anyone next time, okay?”

He groaned in response. "Fine."

"And Tommy?"

"Hm?"

"If anyone tries to hurt you again, come to me, okay? I'm your big brother, it's my job to keep you safe. I promise I won't let anyone hurt you again, so long as I'm here."

"How's my pretty princess doing today?" Wilbur asked into the phone with a grin,

Ignoring the disgusted face Tommy shot at him from across the table.

Schlatt answered back. The two had been talking a lot more recently, especially since they were both out of AA meetings. It was to 'keep each other in check', they always said, always denying the idea that they just enjoyed having company. "Wilbur Soot Watson I am going to kill you and make your death look like an accident."

"Jay 'memory man' Schlatt, you couldn't kill me if you tried."

A scoff came out of the receiver as Wilbur set a bowl of cereal in front of Tommy.

"If that makes you feel better, then sure. You got any plans for the day?"

"As much as I adore spending time with you, I'm busy. I..." He paused, looking at the almost-ten-year-old in front of him. "I actually can't say. It's a surprise for Tommy."

Schlatt laughed. "He's sitting right in front of you, isn't he?"

"Of course he is." Tommy had perked up as soon as he heard the word 'surprise', especially since it was followed by 'for Tommy'. Immediately, ignoring the fact Wilbur was on the phone call, he started asking what the surprise was.

"Alright, I won't keep you then, soy-boi. Have fun on your adventures, 'kay?"

"Got it. Take Tubbo out somewhere too, okay?"

"We'll see."

"Schlatt-"

“I’m taking him somewhere already, don’t worry.”

“Great. Bye, Schlatt.”

“What? No “I love you”?”

Wilbur laughed before hanging up.

“Wilbur. Wilbur. Wilbur. Wilbur.” Tommy had been tapping him on the arm incessantly for at least ninety seconds.

“Yes, Tommy?”

“What’s the surprise?”

“Eat breakfast first, then you’ll find out.”

“Is it a pet cow?”

“No.”

“A pet moth?”

“Eat, Tommy.”

“It *is* a pet moth!”

It was not a pet moth. After Tommy had eaten, Wilbur loaded him into the car, and they went to the county fair. It was... It was actually really fun, and a much needed break for Wilbur. So, for practically the entire day, they went on the sketchy-looking rides, played the games (despite Wilbur trying to assure Tommy that they were all completely rigged), and ate food.

They also had a great time messing with other people. Not pick pocketing or anything, Wilbur wasn’t a crime boy, but just little pranks. Trying to convince people they were time travelers, or other silly things that Tommy came up with.

By the end of the day, Tommy was exhausted. Wilbur took it as a sign to head home.

“Wait!” Tommy shouted, “We haven’t even gotten cotton candy yet!”

So, Wilbur ended up buying them a huge cotton candy thing to share. Tommy carried it, but considering how his eyelids kept drooping, Wilbur wasn't sure how much longer that would last.

He picked the ten year old up and hoisted him onto his shoulders, deciding to give him a piggyback ride to the car. Wilbur wasn't particularly strong, but at least he was strong enough to carry the ten year old.

Someone stopped them halfway back, holding out a camera and gesturing for a picture.

"Oh, really, I don't know if we should-"

"*Please* can we take a picture, Wilby?"

"...Fine, one picture."

The photo cost too much, in Wilbur's opinion. It was slightly blurry, and Wilbur wasn't even looking at the camera, instead grinning at Tommy. But Tommy looked so happy in that picture.

Wilbur would buy a picture frame for it the next day, and from that point on, it sat on top of Wilbur's dresser.

Wilbur hated the rain. It reminded him of tears, like the sky was sad and decided to make it everyone else's problem.

He had been driving Tommy back from a particularly bad parent-teachers conference meeting.

"He's just not meeting expectations." The teacher had said. "He's acting out, causing disruptions in class, and his grades are falling exponentially."

"He's a kid, they make mistakes."

“Listen, Mister Watson,” He despised being called that. It reminded him of his father too much. “I know a little about his home life, and chances are, it has something to do with that. If children don’t have strong parental influences in the home-”

“He has plenty of influences, Ma’am.”

“I’m just saying. Does he have any contact with his father?”

“Of course he does. Are you seriously assuming-”

“I’m not assuming anything. I just mean that children need their *parents* to raise them, is all.”

That comment made Wilbur see red.

“You’re not- actually, you know what?” It had been an awful day at work already. “I’m not dealing with this. Tommy, we’re leaving.” Wilbur had shoved his chair back, and quickly led Tommy out of the school. He’d deal with it some other time, apologize to the teacher, buy her flowers or something, but for now, he was angry.

“Will? Am I going to get in trouble for that?” Tommy was sitting in the backseat, leaning so far forward that his face was pressed into the seat in front of him, trying to gauge Wilbur’s expression a little better.

“No, you’re not.” He was *so* angry. Why was he so angry?

“How come you yelled at my teacher?”

“Because she’s a-” He cut himself off. He didn’t swear in front of Tommy and he wasn’t going to start now. “She’s rude. She has no right to assume anything about our family.”

Tommy was quiet for a moment. “She wants me to live with Phil, doesn’t she?”

Wilbur had stopped calling Phil ‘dad’ as soon as he moved out. Tommy had followed suit.

“She does.”

Another moment of quiet. “I don’t want to go live with Phil.”

“You’re not going back to Phil.” Wilbur said, a little more aggressively than he intended. He could hear Tommy leaning back in his seat. “I’m the only person you need.”

“Well, yeah. You, and maybe some friends from school, and-”

“No, that’s not what I meant. I just...” He sighed. “Who does that lady think she is? Telling me how to raise you- or how *not* to raise you, I guess.”

“I don’t know if-”

Wilbur wasn’t done. “She’s an idiot, that’s what she is. Phil is *not* your father.”

“He kind of is-”

“No, he’s not. He didn’t raise you. *I* raised you. Why doesn’t anyone understand that?” He raised his voice, not quite shouting, but not a regular speaking tone, either. “Phil didn’t, either. I took care of you for *six* years and then he got mad at *me* for wanting to keep raising you. They’re... They’re stupid, that’s it.”

“I thought Phil was smart-”

“He isn’t. He’s as bad as everybody else. You can’t... You can’t trust him. He’ll act nice one moment, and then completely change the rest.”

Phil had been a kind father for the first twelve years of life. As soon as Tommy was born, that kindness had stopped. At least, it felt like it had, anyway.

“What do you mean, Wilby?”

“I *mean* he doesn’t want you.” He snapped. “Nobody wants you.” He was too in his own head to realize how damaging those words would be to the child. How they could haunt him for the rest of his life. Maybe he did realize it, at least somewhat, and just didn’t care.

“Nobody cares about you except for me, got it? So next time some teacher tells you that you should be living with Phil, tell them they can f-”

The light was green.

The light was green. He had been watching the road, he *knew* the light was green.

Then again, the rain was pouring. He could have been mistaken.

Either way, a truck rammed into the driver’s side of his car.

The next moments seemed to happen in slow motion. Wilbur was screaming, Tommy was screaming. There was the screech of the truck's brakes being pressed, but by then it was already too late, as Wilbur's car slid across the road.

All he could feel was pain. In his legs, his back, his neck. Almost immediately there was something warm and sticky dripping down the side of his face.

Desperately, he yanked the steering wheel in an attempt to gain control again, but it was no use. The car was moving on its own, and there was nothing he could do.

Next thing he knew, the sky was where the ground should have been. The front windshield had shattered, and he could feel the glass cutting into his arms face.

The sky was the sky again, and then it wasn't, and then it was, and then...

They were in a ditch. The car was upside down.

He couldn't hear the screaming anymore. All he could hear was the painfully loud ringing in his ears.

He was tired. His vision was blurring, so he closed his eyes. Once he did, he could feel the light splatter of rain against his skin.

Wilbur always hated the rain.

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